This is the Author's version of the paper published as:

**Author Address:** rossharvey@csu.edu.au
**Abstract** UNESCO's Memory of the World Programme is one response to the challenges of preserving cultural heritage. This paper describes its activities, indicates its relationship to other large-scale programs to promote understanding of the importance of preserving heritage, introduces the Australian Memory of the World Program as a case study, and examines some of the issues surrounding the Programme.

Ross Harvey

Professor, School of Information Studies

Charles Sturt University

Locked Bag 675

Wagga Wagga NSW 2678

Australia

Tel. +61 2 69332369

Fax. +61 2 69332733

Email rossharvey@csu.edu.au

Ross Harvey is Professor of Library and Information Management at Charles Sturt University. His interest in preservation stems from a period of employment in 1986-1987 as the National Library of New Zealand's first Newspaper Librarian, when he became aware of the significant issues associated with paper deterioration. Since then he has researched into and published widely about the preservation of documentary heritage materials. Recently his interests have focussed on the preservation of documentary heritage materials in digital format, and in particular on selection and appraisal aspects. Harvey has worked in universities in New Zealand and Singapore, and in Australia at Monash University and Curtin University. His long-standing interest in preservation of library and archival materials has resulted in several books about

preservation, the most recent being *Preserving Digital Materials* (K.G. Saur, 2005). He has been a lecturer in the 2005 and 2006 EU-funded DELOS Summer Schools on Digital Preservation for Digital Libraries.

UNESCO's Memory of the World Programme[1]

Abstract

UNESCO's Memory of the World Programme is one response to the challenges of preserving cultural heritage. This paper describes its activities, indicates its relationship to other large-scale programs to promote understanding of the importance of preserving heritage, introduces the Australian Memory of the World Program as a case study, and examines some of the issues surrounding the Programme.

Introduction

This issue of *Library Trends* examines how cultural heritage preservation is changing around the world because of the stresses and levels of change caused by such things as civil unrest, natural disasters and inequitable distribution of resources. As Tessa Morris-Suzuki notes, we are in a period of global mobility and rapidly changing media, with consequent major changes in how we think about history: "The crisis of history, then, is not a simple matter of amnesia. Rather, it reflects a profound dilemma: in an age of global mobility and multiple, rapidly changing media, how do we pass on our knowledge of the past from one generation to the next? How do we relate our lives in the present to the events of the past? What bits of the past do we claim as our own, and in what sense do they become our property?" (Morris-Suzuki, 2005, p. 6). For it is

important that we preserve our memories, a point made by countless authors in different contexts over many years. Booth, in an exploration of the relationship between memory and identity, reminds us that "memory is essential to the coherence and enduringness of the community (or person), to its boundaries and persistence, in short, to its identity" (Booth, 2006, p. [xiii]), and that with this come the responsibilities that are attached to memory. Another common theme in the discussions about why we preserve memory is that it links us to our past: "If history is civilization's collective memory, then preservation aids memory and sustains history by linking us to the past in a persuasive way" (Cloonan, 2004, p. 36). UNESCO's Memory of the World Programme is one response to these issues. This paper describes its activities, indicates its relationship to other large-scale programs to promote understanding of the importance of preserving heritage, introduces the Australian Memory of the World Program as a case study, and examines some of the issues surrounding the Programme.

## What is the Memory of the World Programme?

The Memory of the World Programme is introduced by these words: "Documentary heritage reflects the diversity of languages, peoples and cultures. It is the mirror of the world and its memory. But this memory is fragile. Every day, irreplaceable parts of this memory disappear forever. UNESCO has launched the Memory of the World Programme to guard against collective amnesia calling upon the preservation of the valuable archive holdings and library collections all over the world ensuring their wide dissemination"

(*Memory of the World*, 2006). It is important to recognise that the Memory of the World Programme is aimed not only at safeguarding documentary heritage judged to be valuable (a contested term that is examined later), but also at promoting both access to the selected material and awareness of the need to preserve it. Although these latter aims are often accorded less importance in countries whose library, archives and museum systems are well developed, this relative emphasis be taken be granted as universal. A Latin American and Caribbean perspective emphasizes all three aspects equally in describing the Memory of the World Programme as "an international effort to safeguard the at risk documentary heritage, to democratise its access, and to raise awareness about its importance" (Vannini, 2004, p. 293).

Many of the strengths, and not a few of the problems, of the Programme arise from its structure, which is, therefore, described here in some detail. The basis and the primary product of the Memory of the World Programme – its *raison d'être* – are its registers of documentary heritage identified as being significant – of world significance for the International Register, of regional significance for the Regional Registers, and of national significance for the National Registers. To support these registers international, regional and national committees have been established.

At the international level there is a secretariat based at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris and an International Advisory Committee (IAC), which meets biannually; a five-person Bureau acts as an executive committee in the periods between the IAC meetings. The IAC

has three sub-committees: one for the Register, which assesses nominations for the International Register, one for Technology, and one for Marketing. Ray Edmondson reminds us that "from the outset the *Memory of the World (MoW) Programme* was conceived as a three-tier structure, with committees operating at the national, regional and international level. Regional committees would fill the space between the overarching mandate of the International Advisory Committee (IAC) and the national committees" (Edmondson, 2005, section 1). Their role would include the development of regional registers and assisting with development of national registers, coordination of regional projects, encouraging cooperation and training within the regions, encouraging the establishment of national committees, and taking on a coordination role in publicity and awareness-raising (Edmondson, 2005, sections 1.1-1.2).

In the fifteen years of the Programme's existence, there has, after an initial flurry, been little activity at the regional level. Although Latin American and Caribbean national committees were formed early in the history of the Programme and were responsible for registering the first five inscriptions on the international register (Vannini, 2004, p. 293) a Latin America and Caribbean Regional Committee was not established until 2000. It has focused on promoting the program and on training and has established a website (*Programa Memoria del Mundo en America Latina el Caribe*, 200-?). For the Asia-Pacific regional committee the story is "largely one of good intentions and false starts" (Edmondson, 2005, section 2.10). An initial meeting in Kuala Lumpur 1994 has been followed by only two more, in 1998 and 2005. There is no regional register for the Asia-Pacific, but there is a website (*MOWCAP*, 200-?).

The most energetic part of the Memory of the World Programme's structure is at the national level, although even here the successes are qualified – for instance, there appear to be national registers in only two countries, Australia and China. (The fact that I write "there appear to be" indicates the poor state of information on some of these national committees available on the UNESCO Memory of the World website and on the national committees' websites, which can be generally characterized as minimal and out of date). In November 2006 there were 70 national committees listed on the Programme's website. These provide a framework for coordination and mechanisms for actions by which the Programme's aims can be met. For many countries, however, the resources and skills required for a national committee to achieve much may be too great for them to be anything more than nominal: skills include "those of selection and appraisal, publicity, fundraising, advocacy, conservation expertise, and the information technology skills necessary for the creation and maintenance of websites, … networking skills of lobbying for support and keeping stakeholders informed and supportive" (Edmondson, 2005, section 6.5); resources are also required to support meetings, training, and promotion.

"The MoW program works on the logic that every country should ultimately have a national MoW register" and therefore maintaining credible registers is crucial to its success (Edmondson, 2005, section 6.12). The registers must be developed and maintained according to the Programme's *General Guidelines* (Edmondson, 2002). Each register requires a process for inviting nominations, transparent selection criteria, and an evaluative mechanism. It also needs to be accessible, desirably through a website. The publicity

value of a national register is considerable, as the experience of the Chinese and Australian national committees confirms: "Inscription is sought after and valued by the nominators. Website-based registers are easily accessible and can be a means of access to the documents themselves. They can become portals for access to national heritage access where there are no alternatives" (Edmondson, 2005, Section 6.15). An effective national register requires significant levels of support – a point amplified later in this paper.

A summary of the country reports given at the second Memory of the World Asia-Pacific Region meeting in the Philippines on 7-9 November 2005 serves to indicate the activities and concerns of national committees. At one end of the spectrum China has a national register with 84 items; two provinces, Zhejiang and Heilongjiang, have established provincial registers. Four nominations from China have been selected for inclusion in the International Register. At the other end of the spectrum the National Commissions for UNESCO in Vietnam and New Zealand (which has two items on the World register) are currently considering the establishment of a national Memory of the World Committee. Korea is one of the most active countries in the Asia-Pacific region, but paradoxically there is no Korean national committee for the Memory of the World Programme, its role being carried out by a subcommittee on movable cultural properties of the Korean Committee on Cultural Properties: it held regional training workshops in 2002 and 2004, and initiated in 2004 the US$30,000 *UNESCO Jikji/Memory of the World Prize* which commemorates the inscription on the World Register of the *Jikji*, the oldest known book of movable metal print in the world and also promotes the

objectives of the Memory of the World Programme. Also active in the Asia-Pacific Region is the Australian committee whose activities are described below. Issues noted by these country reports are lack of awareness of the Programme, especially on the part of the general public, lack of training opportunities and expertise, lack of funding support, and the problems of developing joint nominations for the World Register for documentary heritage of one country that is held in another country.


## The Memory of the World Programme in a Wider Context

The Memory of the World Programme does not exist in a vacuum. The catalyst for its initiation by the Director General of UNESCO in 1992 was the deliberate destruction of the National Library in Sarajevo. More recent examples of civil unrest and its attendant stresses, with their potential for loss of documentary heritage, abound. One is the vulnerability of the records of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Timor-Leste, which include 8,000 submissions on human rights violations and document forced displacements, famine and other disturbances between 1974 and 1999. These are stored at the site from which motorbikes were stolen by a large group of men carrying firearms. "The security guards at the Truth Commission have no guns and when they telephoned for help were told that nothing could be done about looting … Although so far the rooms containing the records have not been looted, they are clearly vulnerable" (Cuddihy, 2006).

The progenitors of the Memory of the World Programme can be found in other UNESCO programs. The 1972 UNESCO *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World's Cultural and Natural Heritage* is now well established. It was primarily developed to protect sites of natural beauty and ecological significance, such as Australia's Great Barrier Reef and the Yosemite National Park in the U.S. At the same time, international interest was also growing in the need to protect intangible cultural heritage. UNESCO promulgated the 1989 *Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore,* which led to the establishment of the Memory of the World Programme in 1992 and to running seminars throughout the world, which evaluated how the 1989 *Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore* had been implemented. This culminated in the 2003 UNESCO *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*. In this Convention intangible cultural heritage is defined as "the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage"; these are "manifested inter alia" in various domains:

  (a) oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage;

  (b) performing arts;

  (c) social practices, rituals and festive events;

  (d) knowledge and practices concerning nature and the

universe;

(e) traditional craftsmanship (*Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage*, 2003).

The future and the success of the Memory of the World Programme is inextricably bound up in the future and the success of its intensely politicized parent organization, UNESCO. In this regard it is worth noting the ongoing disagreement between UNESCO and the U.S., which withdrew from UNESCO in 1984 "citing poor management and policies contrary to U.S. values", but rejoined in 2002 (Bush's U.S./UNESCO decision lauded, 2002). The Programme's website does not, however, list a national program for the United States.

## The Australian Memory of the World Program

The Australian Memory of the World Program is one of the more energetic of the national programs and has made details of its procedures publicly available. It is, therefore, a fitting example to use here as an illustration of the strengths and weaknesses of the Programme as a whole and as a backdrop for the exploration of some of the issues the Programme faces. As Australian input into the international Programme has been, and continues to be, high, the experience of the Australian Committee is frequently referred to by other national committees. This high profile includes Australian authorship of both editions of the Program's key procedural document, the *General Guidelines to Preserve Documentary Heritage* (Foster et al., 1995; Edmondson, 2002). The second edition includes the terms of reference of the Australian national committee as an

example of best practice. Edmondson, currently a member of the Australian national committee, chairs the Asia/Pacific Regional Committee; another Australian Committee member, Ros Russell, is a member of the Bureau of the IAC and chairs its Register Subcommittee, of which Edmondson is also a member as the nominee of a nongovernment organization. Australians have provided much of the Programme's intellectual leadership from its inception and continues to do so, a recent example being workshops based on guidelines for significance. (The program for one of these workshops can be viewed on the Australian Memory of the World Program website: http://www.amw.org.au/significance06/significance06.htm).

The Australian Memory of the World Committee was founded on 18 December 2000. Like many other national programs, it is conducted under the auspices of the Australian National Commission for UNESCO which is responsible, together with the Memory of the World Programme IAC, for endorsing the Australian Memory of the World Committee's terms of reference and its members. According to its terms of reference,

The Australian *Memory of the World* Committee will have the responsibility for the overall management and monitoring of the program in Australia and will:

- receive and assess nominations of documentary heritage for entry on the International and Australian *Memory of the World Registers*
- work in close cooperation with governmental and non-governmental organisations in establishing the Australian *Memory of the World* Register

- maintain the Australian *Memory of the World* Register

- forward nominations to the International Advisory Committee of the *Memory of the World* Program for entry on the World Register

- raise the awareness of and promote the *Memory of the World* Program in Australia

- encourage and attempt to gain government and private sector sponsorship for specific *Memory of the World* projects and activities in Australia

- work in close cooperation with governmental and non-governmental organisations to identify and substantiate recommendations to remove entries from the Australian and World Registers

- monitor all *Memory of the World* activities taking place in Australia

- work in close collaboration with the Asian and Pacific Regional *Memory of the World* Committee

- maintain regular contact with and respond to requests from the International Advisory Committee of the *Memory of the World* Program (http://www.amw.org.au/committee/amw_tor.htm).

The Australian Committee's members are drawn from a range of institutions and organizations to reflect "the diversity of moveable cultural heritage in Australia"; they are knowledgeable about Australia's "cultural heritage institutions and also about the preservation and access challenges of cultural heritage material" (Howell, 2005). The eight-member Committee, which meets about six times a year, in 2006 included representatives from the Australian

National Commission for UNESCO, the National Library of Australia, the National Archives of Australia, the university sector, the audiovisual archiving sector, the Australian Indigenous Cultural Network and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, and the museum sector. There are sub-committees for Assessment, Lost and Missing Documentary Heritage, and Promotion.

The 2005-2006 annual report on the Australian Memory of the World Program (2006) notes that "in its sixth year of operation the Australian Memory of the World Committee has succeeded in further increasing its public profile". It continues, "The first national committee to establish its own website and to have a formalised and transparent system for selecting material for its National Register, every development made by the Australian Committee is groundbreaking work that has set the standard for other national programs. The staff at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris has been kept informed of all actions and where appropriate approval has been sought." Major activities and achievements include the establishment of an Australian Register, currently with 19 inscriptions, based on a biennial schedule that is synchronized with the International Programme, so that selection of material for the Australian Register leads in the following year to nominations for inclusion in the World Register. Award ceremonies, at which certificates are presented by high profile Australians to the custodians of material inscribed on the Australian Register, have provided a high level of publicity for the Australian Memory of the World program. A search for lost and missing documentary heritage is being carried out by a team from Charles Sturt University (Harvey, 2003). Workshops for

custodians of documentary heritage materials have been held in major Australian cities. In 2005 these provided assistance in determining significance and had the important byproduct of raising awareness of the Program. An online manual has been developed which provides instruction in the preparation of applications for material to be considered for inclusion on the Australian Register (Australian Memory of the World Program, 2005). The Australian Memory of the World's Program's website (www.amr.org.au), its principal means of communication and publicity, has beend developed and maintained with considerable effort. This effort has been rewarded by a dramatic increase in hits on the website.

However, despite these achievements, achieving financial sustainability has eluded the Australian Memory of the World Program. Since 2003 its activities have been funded by a small grant, averaging A$5,000 per annum, from the Australian National Commission for UNESCO, by significantly higher amounts of in-kind support from a number of Australia's national and state cultural institutions and its university sector (estimated at around A$40,000 per annum), and by massive amounts of volunteer effort by its unpaid Committee members. A second concern of the Australian Program is to raise levels of awareness of its existence and activities. As it is a relatively new program, substantial effort is still required to increase awareness and encourage participation. A third major issue is the definition of the term significance – a definition intrinsic to the Memory of the World registers, but difficult to agree upon, promulgate, and apply in practice. This issue was the focus of the workshops on significance organized by the Australian Committee during 2005 and 2006. (Much of the above is based on Howell, 2005.)

Two items listed in the Australian Memory of the World Register have been inscribed in the World Register: Captain Cook's *Endeavour* journal and the Mabo Papers, both added in 2001. Cook's Journal is "the key document foreshadowing British colonisation of Australia"; the significance of the Mabo papers resides in "their documentation of a crucial period in the history of race relations in Australia, featuring a series of battles and legal cases over the ownership and use of land, growing awareness of racial discrimination, and the social and health problems of indigenous peoples. The issues discussed in the papers have a bearing on the rights of both indigenous peoples and the descendants of European settlers throughout Australia" (*Australian Memory of the World Register*, 2006). The Register includes the Cinesound Movietone Australian Newsreel Collection 1929-1975 (registered in 2003), the Displaced Persons Migrant Selection Documents 1947-1953 (2004), the 1906 film *The Story of the Kelly Gang* (2004), the National Library's *PANDORA, Australia's Web Archive* (2004 – to date the only digital material on the Register), and records of convicts transported to Australia (2006). The Australian Register also includes the Australian Children's Folklore Collection (2004), possibly the world's largest archive of children's playground games and rhymes.

Edmondson has noted the substantial commitment required to maintain an effective national register. Much reliance is placed on volunteers, who must have the appropriate assessment skills and the ability to develop a website, on the willingness of potential nominators of items, and on mentors to encourage them. It also requires some measure of financial and institutional support (Edmondson, 2005, section 6.16). He outlines the process by which

items are considered for and inscribed on the Australian register:

- Nominations are encouraged by email publicity on listserves and through short training workshops on 'significance' which assist potential nominators to prepare their cases
- Nominations are assessed by an expert subcommittee of the national MoW committee, to whom it makes its recommendations
- The national register is maintained on the committee's website, which is sponsored by the State Library of Victoria
- An annual public event to announce inscriptions and present certificates is sponsored by one of the major libraries or archives
- Committee members volunteer their time; a small expense budget is provided by the National Commission for UNESCO (Edmondson, 2005, 6.17).

Despite its short life, the Australian Program acts as a benchmark for national programs in other countries. It can do this, despite limited financial support, because of the enormous goodwill and support from libraries and archives at national and state levels, and from the high levels of commitment from skilled volunteers. While other national programs have not yet achieved the same level of operation, there is evidence that much is happening, despite limited resources and other local inhibiting factors.


Significance and Other Issues

The success of the Australian program perhaps belies the range and severity of issues that can be identified in the Memory of the World

Programme. There is considerable scepticism about the value and effectiveness of programs such as Memory of the World. Some are doubtful about whether cultural heritage institutions are influential players in long-term preservation of documentary heritage. Matthew Battle, for instance, comments that "Much of what comes down to us from antiquity survived because it was held in small private libraries tucked away in obscure backwaters of the ancient world, where it was more likely to escape the notice of zealots as well as princes. Above all, it is this last point – the needs and tastes of private readers – that determines what survives" (Battle, 2003, p. 31). Tara Brabazon also notes the role that individuals play, observing their valuable contribution in preserving popular culture where institutional collectors did not; there were, she indicates, "myriad alternative sites where ephemeral material was stored, such as the family home [where we might expect to find] a light sabre, toy dalek, Duran Duran posters" (Brabazon, 2000, p. 157). While in theory there is no impediment to individuals submitting nominations to the Memory of the World registers, in practice it is highly unlikely that they would be accepted.

If we accept that cultural heritage institutions do have a role in the Memory of the World Programme, many issues remain. Some basic concepts remain undefined or inadequately defined. Digital documentary heritage poses a particular problem, apparently, to the Programme. To date it appears that the Australian register is the only one that contains an entry for born-digital material – the PANDORA web archive. It seems that fluid entities, those that are constantly growing or changing, such as some archives and digital collections, pose an problem. Whereas documentary heritage is

perceived as fixed, intangible heritage is not. The 2003 Intangible Heritage Convention is clear that "intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, *is constantly recreated* by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity" (*Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage*, 2003). Another example is the lack of value given in some traditions to oral history. Tom Griffiths notes, in the context of Australian history, that "when records are officially preserved, they often leave the locality of their origin, go to the city, become institutionalised and thereby become subject to local suspicion. For anyone schooled in the professional discipline of history, it is a shock to encounter the proud oral culture of rural Australia. In a small community, oral sources of history are often regarded as the pre-eminent means of access to the local past" (Griffiths, 2003, p. 141).

But the major issue faced by the Memory of the World Programme is the understanding of significance. This concept is intrinsic to the Programme at all levels, as displayed in its foundational principles noted in the *General Guidelines to Safeguard Documentary Heritage* (Edmondson, 2002, section 2.1.1): "The *Memory of the World* Programme proceeds on the assumption that some items, collections, holdings or fonds of documentary heritage are part of the inheritance of the world, in the same way as are the sites of outstanding universal value listed in the UNESCO *World Heritage*

*List.* Their significance is deemed to transcend the boundaries of time and culture, and they should be preserved for present and future generations and made accessible to all peoples of the world in some form". (Another principle (Edmondson, 2003, 2.1.3) is that "The Programme seeks to encourage access without discrimination wherever possible", but this seems inimical to the concept of selection, which is implicit in the concept of significance. This point is not explored in this paper.)

The most sustained criticism to have appeared about the role of significance in the Memory of the World Programme is by Australian conservator Robyn Sloggett (2005). She argues that while the aims of the Programme are praiseworthy, it is flawed because it is based on an inappropriate framework and tool – significance – developed in a different context for different purposes. Significance, successful in the built heritage context, is perhaps "so culturally loaded as to be, at best, an irrelevant and, at worst, a dangerous tool with which to address issues of local or distributed culture?"(p. 114). The application of significance in the Australian Memory of the World Program relies heavily on methodology developed for the museum sector and may not be readily applicable in other sectors. There are, Sloggett maintains, many potential dangers in its use. One is the appropriation of the Programme for political purposes: here Sloggett makes the telling point that "the concept of world heritage, a category of democratised heritage, which is so significant as to transcend local or national boundaries, is not a benign, apolitical construct" (p. 118)). Another is the difficulty of engaging across international boundaries, such as with material created in a colonial context,

applicable to more than one country, and now residing outside the countries in which it was created. A third is how to address cultural value for minority cultures in a programme which is based heavily on determining national significance: "Cultural value is not an attribute that can be easily or meaningfully bestowed from beyond the culture; cultural attributes are insider knowledge. … there are many examples where national agendas are best served by the marginalisation or negation of local cultures" (pp. 119-120. Sloggett also notes the lack of protection that registration provides and points to recent experiences with items on the *World Heritage List.* Perhaps, she suggests, significance is useful only as a risk assessment process assisting in determining priorities for applying resources, determining it "works against the relative and fluid way in which cultural value is often developed and ascribed" (p. 123). Sloggett allows that the Memory of the World Programme is beneficial, assisting with procuring funding and improving awareness of preservation issues, but it must address some intrinsic issues. She concludes: "Heritage is by definition local. The concept of world culture is as anachronistic and problematic as any other globalised agenda" (p. 124). No rejoinder to Sloggett's carefully argued comments has yet appeared in print.

Another issue is that the Memory of the World Programme is not truly international. Its eurocentric nature is noted by Edmondson in a report on the Asia-Pacific regional program. Of the 120 inscriptions in the International Register in 2005, over half (63) were from Europe, with 26 from the Asia-Pacific region, 18 from the Latin America-Caribbean region, eight from Africa and five from Arab countries. At the country level, Austria had eight inscriptions and

Germany and Russia seven each, while China had only four (Edmondson, 2005, section 4.2). Edmondson also pointed out a European bias in the "Guided Visits" on the MoW website, with only a handful from outside Europe (Edmondson, 2005, section 4.3), and that the Programme's key working document, the *General Guidelines*, essential for preparing nominations for national, regional and international registers, was not available in the languages of many countries. He suggested that the lack of a Chinese translation excludes about one-third of the population of the Asia-Pacific region from Memory of the World registration processes (Edmondson, 2005, section 6.18).

A series of structural and resourcing issues are indicated in a 2005 discussion paper produced by three people who have been active in the Programme since its inception (Boston, Edmondson & Schüller, 2005). They suggest that the Programme has been consistently under-resourced and compare its staffing levels – two part-time staff – with those of sister UNESCO programs: its model the *World Heritage List Programme* has 11 staff members plus support staff, and the *Intangible Cultural Heritage Programme*, which began only in 2003, has 13 staff members. The resources allocated to the Memory of the World Programme allow only a minimal level of activity. The Programme, they suggest,  does not address many of the objectives and strategies in its guidelines: for example, its objective – "To facilitate preservation, by the most appropriate techniques, of the world's documentary heritage" – has to date resulted in only a small number of training workshops and pilot preservation projects. Similarly, its strategies – identification of documentary heritage, raising awareness, preservation, and access –

have had patchy results, but some successes are noted: for example, the Digital Heritage Charter (p. 7).

The Boston, Edmondson and Schüller discussion paper devotes considerable attention to structural issues (pp. 7-10), noting that the operation of the programme at its various levels ranges from successful to non-existent and suggesting that "in many cases, it is not the form that is wrong but the selection of the people". Changes are proposed to the Programme's top-level committee, the International Advisory Committee, and its meeting protocol, its executive committee, the Bureau (which they consider has stopped functioning), its Technical and Register Subcommittees ("Eurocentric") and its Marketing Subcommittee ("a fiction: it produced a report several years ago on which no action was taken and has done nothing further"), increased staffing to a full-time secretariat with sufficient staff and budget, and a larger budget with more transparency about how it is allocated. The lack of an effective regional committee structure also receives attention, and a renewed focus on, and support for them is proposed. Boston, Edmondson and Schüller claim that the Memory of the World Programme lacks a forward plan, and that "strict adherence to its 'laws' – the *General Guidelines* – does not seem to be part of MoW's culture", with the outcome that "politically expedient decisions" are undermining the Programme's credibility (p. 10).

Where to From Here for the MoW Programme?

Despite apparently widespread pessimism about the future of the Memory of the World Programme, Edmondson notes that "the way ahead is not difficult to discern" (Edmondson, 2005, section 11.1) and provides a set of recommendations: a plan based on the Programme's strategic directions as articulated in 2002 needs to be fully developed and implemented, the committee structure at international level needs to be revisited, and, most important, guaranteed resources are required (Edmondson, 2005, sections 11.1-11.4).

There is in fact some evidence that new structures are emerging. In September 2006 the New Zealand Early Text Centre (NZETC) circulated a request for advice about relevant material to be included in a Pacific Island Memory of the World Register, focusing initially on the founding documents of Pacific Island nations (Mapplebeck, 2006). This register is a subset of the Programme's Asia-Pacific Region and it could, therefore, be argued that it represents the beginning of a new structure based on sub-regions. Vannini has suggested the formation of "thematic collaboration networks" as a means of developing Memory of the World activities, such as a Human Rights Archives Network and a Slave Archives Network which could organize training, seminars and workshops, develop digitization projects, and develop collective catalogs (Vannini, 2004, p. 300).

Although Edmondson's comments refer specifically to structural issues, they apply more widely. For a start, there is a general and increasing awareness that cultural heritage collecting institutions are "socially constructed sites of struggle and contestation"

(Sassoon, 2003, pp. 40-41), and with this awareness comes greater willingness to ponder its implications for collectors, collections, and programs such as the Memory of the World. History is shaped by what archives collect, Joanna Sassoon (2003) reminds us, noting "the way in which archival memory is created and preserved, and the assumptions behind its perceived neutrality" (p. 40). All selection and appraisal is value-laden and the Memory of the World Programme is no exception. It is important for the future of the Programme that we better understand and articulate this active role and consider how to apply these understandings to it. The need that Sassoon perceives for "more transparent ways of working within archival institutions and an increased awareness of the cultural functions of archival work" (p. 45) applies equally to the Memory of the World Programme.

We should also be heartened that there *is* a debate about significance. Clarification of this important (and difficult) concept in relation to its application to documentary heritage will assist the Memory of the World Programme, with outcomes that include an expansion of the Programme from its current exclusivity, which at present allows only iconic items from dominant cultures onto its registers. The International Council of Archives has urged an expansion of the International Register to include all national archives, as a special category if necessary, based on the importance of context to records, which means that "the focus of archival operations is on the total fonds and to select only the 'most important' documents for inclusion in the World Register is seen as incompatible with archival practice and ethics" (International Council on Archives, 2005). Although this could be

considered as no more than an ambitious ambit claim, it does recognise the reality of many collections of documentary heritage as constantly evolving entities, something that current Memory of the World thinking appears not to accommodate.

The Memory of the World Programme is imperfect. Some suggest it is fatally flawed. Its heavy emphasis on inscription on its registers as an acknowledgment of significance is unlikely to provide security in the face of threat. It suffers from an inevitable politicization, resulting from its association with the intensely politicized UN. It has not yet achieved status as a UNESCO Convention, an achievement that would significantly enhance its status and would potentially attract greater support and resources.

Continuing to support the Memory of the World Programme, and working to improve it, are better than inaction. Our role as professionals requires us to support such effort, despite the Programme's many conceptual, structural, and resource difficulties. The Memory of the World Programme is one of a number of large-scale collaborative programs for the preservation of cultural heritage that are increasingly gathering momentum in the search for viable strategies and mechanisms to ensure the preservation of our documentary cultural heritage.

Notes

1 Ross Harvey is a member of the Australian Memory of the World
  Committee. Unless otherwise attributed, the views expressed here
  remain his own and not those of the Committee.

References

Australian Memory of the World Program (2006). *Annual report F/Y
    2005/2006.* Retrieved December 14, 2006 from
    http://www.amw.org/committee/annual_reports/amw_aro6.pdf

Australian Memory of the World Program (2005). *Manual for submitting
    nominations to the 2006 Australian Memory of the World
    Register.* Retrieved December 14, 2006 from
    http://www.amw.org.au/guidelines/2006/manual.htm.

*Australian Memory of the World Register* (2006). Retrieved December
    11, 2006 from http://www.amw.org.au/register/amw_reg06.htm.

Battle, M. (2003). *Libraries: An unquiet history.* London: Vintage.

Booth, W. J. (2006). *Communities of memory: On witness, identity and
    justice*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Boston, G., Edmondson, R.,& Schüller, D. (2005). Memory of the World
    Programme: A debate about its future: A paper for discussion
    in Lijiang by the International Advisory Committee.

Brabazon, T. (2000). He lies like a rug: Digitising memory. *Media
    International Australia, 96,* 153–161.

Bush's U.S./UNESCO decision lauded (2002), *American Libraries,*
    November 1, p. 8.

Cloonan, M.V. (2004). Monumental preservation: a call to action, *American Libraries, 35*(8), 34-38.

*Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage* (2003). Retrieved December 4, 2006 from http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich_convention/index.php?pg=0000 6

Cuddihy, D. (2006). Posting to aus-archivists listserv: aus-archivists-bounces@archivists.org.au, 6 June 2006, Subject: Timor Records destroyed.

Davey, G. B. (2005). Mirror of the World: The National Library and UNESCO's Memory of the World Program, *NLA News, 16*(2). Retrieved December 13, 2006 from http://www.nla.gov.au/pub/nlanews/2005/nov05/article3.html

Edmondson, R. (2002). *Memory of the World: General Guidelines to Safeguard Documentary Heritage* (Rev. ed.). Paris: UNESCO.

Edmondson, R. (2005). Final Report on the Development of the Asia-Pacific Regional Dimension of the Memory Of The World Program, Prepared for UNESCO, September 2005.

Foster, S., Russell, R., Lyall, J., & Marshall, D. (1995). *General guidelines to preserve documentary heritage.* Paris: UNESCO.

Griffiths, T. A. (2003). The language of conflict. In B. Attwood & S. G. Foster (Eds.). *Frontier conflict: The Australian experience* (pp. 135- XX), Canberra: National Museum of Australia.

Harvey, R. (2003). UNESCO's Memory of the World Programme and Australia's lost and missing documentary heritage. *Australian Library Journal*, *52*(2), 135-148.

Howell, A. (2005). Report: UNESCO Australian Memory of the World Program. Prepared for UNESCO Memory of the World Regional Committee Meeting for Asia and the Pacific (MOWCAP) Manila, 7-9 November 2005.

International Council on Archives (2005). The International Council on Archives and the Memory of the World Programme: A Position Paper. Retrieved December 11, 2006 from http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=19086&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html.

Mapplebeck, G. (2006). Posting to amwlist listserv: amwlist@alanhowell.com.au, 5 September 2006. Subject: MOW Register: Pacific.

*Memory of the World: UNESCO-CI* (2006). Retrieved December 4, 2006 from http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=1538&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html.

Morris-Suzuki, T. (2005). *The past within us: Media, memory, history*. London: Verso.

*MOWCAP: Asia/Pacific Regional Committee for the Memory of the World Program* (200-?). Retrieved December 4, 2006 from http://www.unesco.mowcap.org/index.htm

*Programa Memoria del Mundo en America Latina el Caribe* (200-?). Retrieved December 4, 2006 from http://infolac.ucol.mx/mow/

Sassoon, J. (2003). Phantoms of remembrance: Libraries and archives as "the collective memory". *Public History Review,* 10, 40-60.

Sloggett, R. (2005). Valuing significance or signifying value?: Culture in a global context. *Archives and Manuscripts*, *33*(2), 110-129.

Vannini, M. (2004). The Memory of the World Program in Latin America and the Caribbean, *IFLA Journal, 30*(4), 293-301.